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## UNCLE SAM'S TOMATO CLUBS---HOW 3,000 SOUTHERN GIRLS ARE COMPETING WITH BOY CORN RAISERS---UNCLE SAM'S IDEAL COOK

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.  
Washington, D. C.

Uncle Sam, patriarch, is beginning to work for the girls. You have heard of the boys' corn clubs which have been organized throughout the South. They have already more than 100,000 members, and they will number more than 200,000 before the year closes. That work is carried on under the direction of Secretary Wilson, and it is backed up by the revolution, and the creation of a race of business women on the farms of the South.

### Girls' Tomato Clubs.

A similar movement has now begun in order to wake up the girls. It originated last January, with the starting of a girls' tomato club in Aiken, S. C. The Agricultural Department is backing it, and there are now more than 3,000 girls, in different parts of the South, who are each raising a patch of tomatoes, under directions sent them from Washington. The agents of the department are traveling over the country, establishing tomato clubs in three counties of each Southern State, and in time they will turn the whole South into a market garden. This is one of the most radical of the new schemes of Uncle Sam, patriarch. It means the bringing of woman into our great industrial revolution, and the creation of a race of business women on the farms of the South.

### Want to Compete With the Boys.

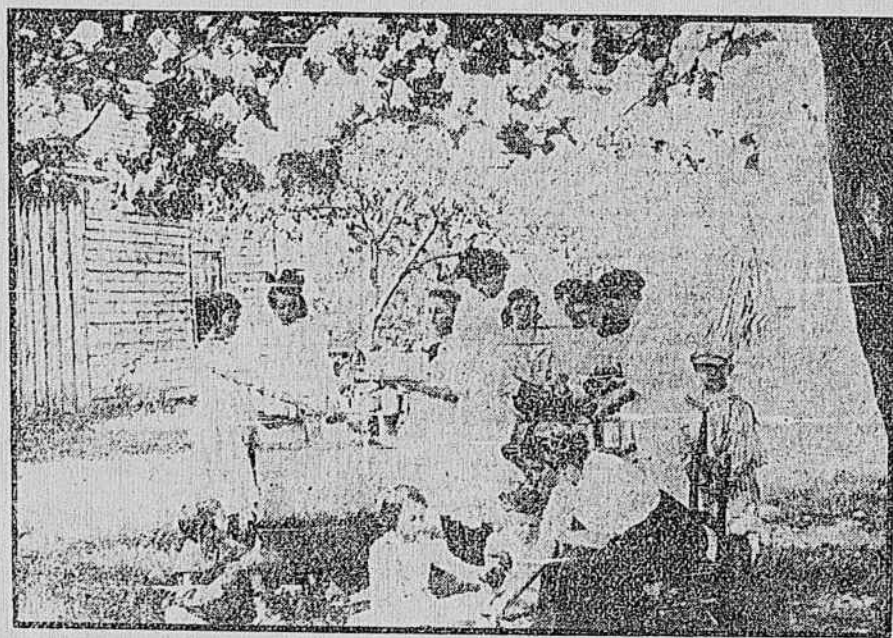
The idea came from the corn clubs. In them each boy was given one acre by his father. He was to plant it himself, and to have all the profit. I have already written of the mighty results. In certain cases the boys made several hundred dollars off their respective acres, and this year one of them expects to net \$1,000 from a five-acre tract, but money is to send him through school.

Since the organization of the corn clubs the girls of the vicinities in which they were established have been writing the Agricultural Department whether there was not something for them to do. They have been allowed to compete with the boys in the corn clubs, and in a number of instances, notwithstanding their sex, they have produced corn above the average of the clubs to which they belonged. In a South Carolina club, for example, there were two girls who each raised more than 100 bushels of corn off one acre, doing all the cultivation themselves. One of them raised 120 bushels on her acre. This was Miss Hanna Bledsoe, of Clarendon county. She belonged to a club of 12, of whom 140 were boys. There were only three boys who raised more than she did, and the average of the club was sixty-two bushels per acre.

### The First Girls' Club.

In Aiken county the boys' corn club had fifteen members, and their success was the envy of their sisters. The boys' clubs were organized through the schools, and the girls discussed this matter with their teachers. Thereupon one of them, Miss Marie S. Cromer, started the tomato club movement. She had the assistance of the county superintendent and of the State agent of our Agricultural Department.

Miss Cromer devoted her evenings to writing letters to girls in different parts of the county and her Saturdays to securing members. As a re-



A CANNING PARTY.

sult a club of forty-six little girls was organized, and a list of valuable prizes secured for those who did the best work. Some of the prizes were money and others were books. One was a free scholarship to the Winthrop Normal and Industrial College, or a college education for the girl who secured it.

This prize was won by a girl who planted, cultivated and gathered a sufficient crop of tomatoes from her one-tenth of an acre to fill 542 three-pound cans. She not only raised the tomatoes, but canned them, and in addition made a dozen other products consisting of pickles, relishes, and preserves. Her tomato cans were all sold at the rate of \$1.25 per dozen, bringing in a gross amount of between \$60 and \$80 from her tenth of an acre. At the same rate an acre would have yielded a gross of from \$500 to \$600, but from this, of course, must be deducted the labor she did on the place and the cost of the cans. It is enough to make one's eyes bulge.

### One-Tenth Acre Farms.

It is an old saying that ten acres are enough for any one man to handle. These plans of the Agricultural Department are based on one-tenth of an acre. It does not seem much. It is equal to a strip forty-three feet front and 100 feet deep. It's not much more than a road-sized town lot, yet Uncle Sam thinks it is quite enough to keep one little girl busy in addition to her school work. During the time the tomato crop grows, the parents are required to give the land and do the first plowing, and it is also insisted that the girl receive the money which

comes from her crop. The girl is expected to read all circulars and bulletins sent her by the Department of Agriculture. She is told how to plant and raise her tomatoes, and it is by such directions that 3,000 little girls are now working. Remember that each has only one-tenth of an acre. Well, here is what Uncle Sam tells his daughters to do:

"Where possible have three loads of well rotted barnyard manure put on the plot. Then plow the land deep, or about two inches deeper than usual. The plowing should be eight inches deep to bring up sufficient moisture for the plants. After this the soil should be thoroughly pulverized, the clods being broken up very fine. All this should be done before planting time."

The next paragraph tells how to raise the plants from the seed by taking a box two feet wide and four feet long and one foot deep without a bottom. Sink this in a sunny, protected place and fill it to the depth of six inches with stable manure, that of horses or cows preferred. Tramp this down a little and on the top place three inches of good garden soil. This will make a hotbed. The manure will warm the soil.

### Planting the Seeds.

Now plant the tomato seeds, putting them in from one-quarter to half an inch deep, and as soon as they are an inch high thin them out so that they stand an inch and a half apart each way. This will give you about 400 plants. You must be sure they are kept moist, and water them if it does not rain. Cover the box at night with a

cotton cloth or thin blanket, and if there is danger of cold weather you may place some loose straw over the top by laying a board or two on the box, so that the straw will not injure the plants. The straw must not remain too long, and only when you have a cold snap. By so doing the plants will be hardy and each plant will be strong.

When the plants are about three inches tall they can be set out. Mark your land in squares four feet each way, and at the corners of each square set out a tomato by excavating a little with a hoe. Get a handful of rich dirt scraped up from the barnyard and throw a handful of this in the hole for each plant. Now take up your plants, keeping with each as much soil as possible, and set them out deep in the ground.

The directions say that three pounds of fertilizer should be given to each hill, and the girl is told just how much nitrogen, potash and phosphoric acid this should contain and how it should be applied.

There are also a number of suggestions as to the kinds of soil and seed; and how the surface is to be kept free of weeds and to have a dust-mulch to save the moisture. There is something as to pruning tomatoes, and tying the plants to stakes; in short, full directions which, if followed out, will make each girl a good old-fashioned gardener. The department sends out seeds for the girls belonging to such clubs, but these must come through the State agent or organizer.

The prizes are awarded not only

upon the quantity of tomatoes raised, but the profits on the investment. Each girl's work is graded under five heads. First, quantity of tomatoes produced; second, quality of tomatoes, and third, variety. Each of these counts 20 per cent. Then there is the profit on the investment, another 20 per cent, and the history or report, which counts the same, the whole making up the 100 per cent. The prizes go to the girls who stand highest.

The object of the club is to give the girls some means of earning money and to help them furnish their homes with canned and fresh vegetables. It is to reduce the cost of living, to produce better living, as well as to make the home and farm more interesting and helpful to all members of the family.

The government and States are teaching the girls not only how to make gardens, but also how to cook and how to make money out of their work. In the reorganization of the Aiken Club its founder, Miss Cromer, spent a summer in New York visiting the domestic science schools there. In order to teach the girls how to handle the crop, at her directions a canning outfit was shipped to the club, and the tomatoes grown by the girls were put up under her superintendence. On the first canning day all the tomatoes brought in were put up. There were 125 cans in all, and even faster work than this was done in the succeeding days. At the same time instructions were given in the making of pickles, catsup, chow chow and preserves from tomatoes.

The tomatoes put up by those girls

were marketed through the stores. The club had its own can labels, consisting of a picture of a big red tomato, with the words "South Carolina" above it, and a statement on the opposite side that it was grown and packed by the girls of Aiken county. The tomatoes were so good that the product was rapidly sold, and I am told that there will be a ready market for all that can be raised in the future. This is so everywhere throughout the South. The cotton mills and the factories there are rapidly increasing, and the demand for groceries and canned goods is now supplied by the North. From this time on such things will be produced in the country near by.

County Fairs and Club Fairs.

These boys' and girls' clubs are making a stir all over the South. The corn clubs have resulted in the organization of many county fairs in places where fairs have been unknown before. The boys have brought their exhibits to the county seats, and the farmers have thereupon organized fairs, at which all sorts of live stock and farm produce have been shown.

This has been the case in Aiken county, where a fair company has been organized with a capital of \$8,000, and where prizes are given for tomatoes and tomato products.

One of the most interesting features of the tomato club is its effect upon the social community. It brings the people together and creates a fellow interest in each other's work. A new sort of gathering has been instituted, known as the girls' canning party. At this the members of one or of the several clubs come together, and can

their tomatoes, ending their work with a party or picnic. Such events are usually at the home of one of the members. The boys of the corn clubs are often invited, and they aid the girls by bringing in the wood and water and in keeping the fires. They also help with the soldering.

In some of the places the canning outfit is carried from one centre to another, and in other instances each club has its own canning outfit, which can be furnished at as low a cost as \$10. I have before me a report of one of these tomato parties. It occurred at White Pond, S. C., at the home of one of the girls. There were ten members of the club present, and a crowd of spectators from the farms nearby. The canning began early, and was carried on under the instructions of one of the teachers. By noon 150 cans were filled and capped ready for shipment. After this a dozen water-melons were served, and a picnic dinner was eaten under the trees.

Poultry Clubs for the Future.

The Department of Agriculture thinks it best to confine this work at first to tomatoes alone, although a little later on cucumbers and beans will be added. It is expected also to extend the prizes to poultry, but the competition in poultry raising will be confined to the graduates of the tomato clubs, and will succeed their instruction in vegetable raising.

The most of the work is being done in connection with the schools, and it is found to be highly educational, teaching the little ones much about the soil and plants, and at the same time inculcating practical ideas of business, hygiene and general home improvement.

Uncle Sam's Ideal Cook.

In connection with this work the department has on hand a number of cook books. I have one before me which came from there. It is gotten up by the Industrial College, at Winthrop, S. C., which gave a scholarship to the girl who raised 512 cans of tomatoes on her one-tenth-acre patch. The book is devoted to recipes for tomatoes, catsups and cucumbers, and it begins with this quotation from Ruskin as to the ideal cook:

"To be a good cook means a knowledge of all fruits, herbs, salines and spices, and of all that is healing and sweet in fields and groves, and savory in meats. It means carefulness, inventiveness, watchfulness, willingness and readiness of appliance. It means the economy of your great-grandmothers and the science of modern chemists. It means much tasting and no wasting. It means English thoroughness, French art and Arabian hospitality. It means, in fine, that you are to be perfectly and always ladies (lady givers), and are to see that every one has something nice to eat."

The book then goes on to give recipes for canning and to show how to cook tomatoes in various ways. It deals with tomato salads, tomato pickles, tomato catsup and green and ripe tomato preserves. Such work cannot fail to improve the cooking of the South.

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